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ABSTRACT

Using findings from qualitative research with teachers in one urban, public high school, the study argues that teachers need to be teacher centered in order to change their practices and work toward improvement for the benefit of themselves and their students. Teachers (N=9) in this study recognized that, in order to do their best for students, they needed to center some of their energy and efforts on their own interests and requirements as learners and on their own needs for control, security, power, and a life outside of school. The teachers in this particular school acted on their own desires as learners and maintained control in the classroom and control over self in order to change their practices. The study concludes that efforts to empower teachers as change agents must recognize teachers' needs and allow teachers to articulate how they can best be supported in their work to change and improve. (Contains 45 references.) (Author/ND)

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TEACHER CENTERED FOR TEACHER CHANGE

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TEACHER CENTERED FOR TEACHER CHANGE

Stephanie Kadel-Taras

Abstract

Using findings from qualitative research with teachers in one urban, public high school, the author argues that teachers are and need to be teacher centered in order to change their practices and work toward improvement for the benefit of themselves and their students. Teachers in this study recognized that, in order to do their best for students, they needed to center some of their energy and efforts on their own interests and requirements as learners and on their own needs for control, security, power, and a life outside of school. This paper describes how teachers in this one school acted on their own desires as learners and maintained control in the classroom and control over self in order to change their practices. It concludes that efforts to empower teachers as change agents must recognize their needs and allow teachers to articulate how they can best be supported in their work to change and improve.

Introduction

Without a doubt, most teachers make their students' needs the first priority of their work. When teachers make changes in what and how they teach, they are focused on improving students' learning experiences (Kadel-Taras, 1996; Wasley, 1990; Wilson, Miller, and Yerkes, 1993). In other words, teachers are student centered in their teaching concerns and course planning. However, this study, using qualitative research with teachers in one urban, public high school, finds that, when teachers change their practices, they also attend to their own needs for learning and professional growth, their intellectual interests, their beliefs about the purposes of their work, their understandings of themselves as individuals, and their life priorities. In this way, teachers appear to be teacher centered as well as student centered in their professional activities and efforts to improve. As one teacher in this study said about her participation in school improvement efforts, "I like to get involved in things, and try to improve things, but as much as anything, I think I thought I could learn something from the process. So I could give somethin' and get somethin'."

Through their ongoing efforts to change their practices, the teachers in this study hoped to

make a difference for others (to "give somethin'"), but they also expected that their work would benefit themselves (that they would "get somethin'" in return). In addition, teachers recognized that, in order to do their best for students, they needed to center some of their energy and efforts on their own interests and requirements as learners and on their own needs for control, security, power, and a life outside of school. In the following pages, I will describe the theoretical basis for my research on educational change, outline the study I conducted, and then explore the connection between teacher change and teacher-centered behaviors and attitudes through an examination of the importance of teacher learning and teacher control.

Researching Teacher Change

This study adds to a body of research on educational reform that focuses on teachers' roles in the change process to improve teaching and learning. Most of this literature has focused on how teachers respond to changes proposed by outsiders (e.g., Chenoweth and Kushman, 1993; D. K. Cohen, 1991; Schofield, 1989), even though some of these studies have made teachers' views of and experiences with change a central concern (e.g., Fullan, 1991; Stephens, Gaffney, Weinzierl, Shelton, and Clark, 1993; Wilson, 1988). Only recently have some researchers, many of them teachers themselves, begun to explore the change process as it is initiated and carried out in classrooms by teachers for their own purposes (e.g., Ball and Rundquist, 1993; Louden, 1991; Wasley, 1990; Wideman, 1991; Wilson, et al., 1993; Wolk and Rodman, 1994).

These latter studies have presented teacher change as an ongoing search for better ways to teach and address students' needs and have valued the teacher's role as a learner. Such research recognizes that teachers do not just continue business as usual in their classrooms until someone comes along to tell them to change. Rather than acting as mere implementers or recipients of

change, teachers are themselves planners of change, designers of new approaches, facilitators for each other, seekers of new knowledge, and researchers on what works. Approaches to educational improvement and school reform can be enhanced by explorations of teacher change in its ongoing, spontaneous, problem-centered, teacher-directed forms. Research from this perspective has prompted new questions about teachers' understandings of their work, teacher reflection, teacher empowerment, and the purpose of professional development (Cuban, 1990; Kahaney, 1993; Richardson, 1990, 1994a, 1994b; Rud and Oldendorf, 1992).

I want to clarify my perspective on the concept of "teacher change," because this relates to how I approached the data collection and how I have chosen to discuss my findings. Although the phrase "teacher change" is predominant in the literature on this issue (and Richardson [1990] even refers to this body of research as the "teacher-change literature"), I have struggled with the neutrality of the term "change" as opposed to "improvement," "growth," "development," or some other word that is more suggestive of positive change. "Change" does not commit itself to any normative expectations. Change can also be quite limited in its purposes, coming about unintentionally in response to changes in the environment, requiring no new learning on the part of the person making the change, and resulting in no lasting effects (for example, changing one's jacket because one discovers that it is raining outside). Given these weaknesses of the term "change," the phrase "teacher change" suffers accordingly, leaving the reader confused as to whether or not teacher change is positive, extensive, a learning experience, and so on.

I have decided to use a variety of terminology in order to partially address these difficulties. As the title of this paper makes clear, I am still using the term "teacher change," and I later talk often of "teachers' change efforts." With these words, I am referring to what teachers do in their classrooms to try to improve themselves as teachers and improve students' learning

experiences. For the most part, the changes that the teachers in this study were making were improvements, and the changes they desired to make were based on a wish to improve. Although the phrases "teacher improvement" or "teacher development " (Jackson, 1992) might also work well here, not all changes that teachers make for the benefit of students result in improvement or development of the teacher; for example, sometimes a change is made to create a better match between the teacher's practices and the needs of students, but improvement or growth of the teacher is not required. Also, as a few teachers in this study admitted, an occasional attempt at change may not result in an improvement in the class (and might even be worse than doing nothing), but these changes can still be instructive as to why and when teachers change and how they reflect on their work (Richardson and Anders, 1994). Compared to "teacher improvement," then, "teacher change," in its very neutrality, leaves open the question of who benefits from the change and whether the change is positive; thus, teachers' varied experiences with change can be accommodated. On the other hand, since most changes that the teachers in this study were making were improvements, I occasionally use the term "improve." I also talk in the pages that follow about teachers "trying new things" or "doing new things" in their classroom work, because this was the way that I phrased my requests for nominations of teachers for this study.

I should also clarify what I mean by voluntary, ongoing changes. I asked teachers to tell me about changes they were trying to make in their instruction, and I accepted their definitions of what was new and of what changes they were undertaking. For the most part, teachers did not even bring up changes that they felt forced to make, if these existed, although teachers occasionally spoke about expectations from others outside the classroom that inspired them to make changes in their practices. In using the qualifier "ongoing," I am referring to my assumption, when I went into this study, that most teachers change all the time. I share

Lieberman and Miller's (1991) notion of teaching practice as "craft" because it is concerned with "the making and remaking of an object until it satisfies the standards of its creator" (p. 95). Unlike other research on educational change, I did not focus on a particular instructional strategy, curriculum, or school improvement plan that had been initiated and could be studied as it was implemented. Instead, I talked with teachers about the kinds of changes that they made every year, every month, every day of their careers in response to the changing needs of students, new knowledge they have gained, and their own needs for growth and development as professionals. Not all teachers fit this profile--some teachers in my study were not engaged in ongoing changes in practice--but I also tried to examine why teachers differed in their approach to this kind of change.

The Study

In seeking to contribute to recent efforts to understand teacher change, I studied nine teachers' voluntary, ongoing changes in instructional practice and the ways they made sense of what they were doing. During the end of the 1993-94 school year and throughout the 1994-95 school year, I engaged in classroom observations and interviews with these teachers, who all taught in the same public high school, Davis High.[1] The theoretical research perspective of symbolic interactionism (see, e.g., Blumer, 1969; Ritzer, 1975) combined with qualitative research methods (see, e.g., Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Wolcott, 1994) best describes my approach to this study.

Davis High School is located in a middle-class residential neighborhood of a medium-sized

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[1]Consistent with my promise of confidentiality, all names of institutions and persons have been changed.

northeastern city. Its one- and two-story brick buildings, connected by an indoor swimming pool, sit on a sprawling, hillside campus with playing fields and parking lots. One of four city high schools in a metropolitan area of about 300,000 residents, Davis High serves a diverse population of 1,100 students in grades nine through twelve. These students come from the surrounding neighborhood, which includes children of professionals and of faculty at a nearby university as well as from a lower-income community of rented houses and an area of low-income apartment housing. About 45 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. During the year that I engaged in field work at Davis High, the administration reported that 41 percent of the students were Black, 39 percent were White, 3 percent were Asian, 2 percent were Hispanic, and 15 percent were "other." This last category may have included many students who were of mixed ethnic background.

The teaching staff at Davis High is not as diverse. The faculty in 1994-95 included seventy-one White teachers, nine Black, and one Asian. One teacher with whom I spoke believed that the faculty was made up of primarily older and more experienced teachers, and the school office staff estimated that fifty percent of the teachers would be eligible for retirement within ten years. Only ten percent of the faculty have been teaching less than five years.

I did not know any of the Davis teachers when I began my research there, but I had briefly met the principal, a Black man in his forties, a few times before. My relationship with a colleague who had previously taught and conducted research at the school facilitated my entry to this study site. I began my research at Davis High by asking various school staff--including the Staff Development Facilitator, the librarian, the principal, and two teachers who are on the School Improvement Committee--to name teachers who were "doing new things." I was not specifically seeking exemplary teachers, so I did not make any references to the quality of the teachers being

nominated. Consistent with a grounded theory approach to qualitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I used theoretical sampling to decide which teachers to include in the study. The nominations of teachers doing new things automatically provided a list of teachers who were at least perceived to be involved in changes in their practice. In addition, preliminary discussions with people at the school led me to wonder about the differences between experienced and newer teachers' approaches to change, so I tried to put together a sample of teachers whose years in the teaching profession ranged from few to many. I also expected that men and women might think differently about their teaching careers, so I wanted to include both genders. Further, given that high school teachers are, in general, subject specialists, and assuming that one's course content influences one's practice, I wanted to be sure to study teachers who taught different subject areas.

Nine teachers participated in this study. Two teachers were men (both White), and the rest were women (five White and two Black). The sample included two English teachers and one teacher each in math, physics, chemistry, English as a Second Language (ESL), Spanish, and social studies. The ninth teacher was currently working full-time as the school's Staff Development Facilitator and did not have her own classroom, she had been an English teacher at Davis before taking on this new role. Two teachers had taught less than five years, four had taught between ten and twenty years, and three had taught more than twenty years, but not all had taught non-stop, some had left teaching for a time to raise families and work other jobs.

I studied the work of these teachers one at a time by observing several class periods over a week or two, talking with the teacher after classes, and then interviewing the teacher once after school or during a double planning period. When I first called teachers, I explained the purpose of the study, requested their participation, and asked them what class periods they would prefer me to visit. I observed between four and ten class periods per teacher. Usually, I sat in the back

or on the side, out of the way of the main action of a class, and quietly took notes on what was happening.

Classroom observations allowed me to build rapport with each teacher before the in-depth interview and to get some idea of each teacher's style and strengths, relationships with students, classroom challenges, and understandings of her or his work in daily practice. Most of the teachers spoke with me informally before or after classes, in addition to the formal interview, and they shared with me information about their classes and about activities they had done or were planning. Each formal interview lasted between an hour and ninety minutes and took place in the teacher's classroom. DeVault's (1990) hope for interviewing is that, "The researcher is actively involved with respondents, so that together they are constructing fuller answers to questions that cannot always be asked in simple, straightforward ways" (p. 100), and I wanted to create an atmosphere for this kind of discussion with the teachers. I tried to use a flexibly structured interview approach in which I asked a number of open-ended questions but tried to follow the teacher's lead. Although I brought a list of possible questions with me, I strove to allow the interview to proceed more like a conversation than a series of questions and answers. Each interview was recorded on audiotape, and I transcribed them as soon as possible after the interview, adding my own observations as I typed. Following Strauss's (1987) suggestions for seeking "conceptual density" in one's interpretation, I analyzed data throughout the field work by engaging in line-by-line coding of the field notes, writing reflective and speculative memos, and keeping an eye out for possible "core categories" that could bring together a number of codes.

Teacher Centered for Teacher Change

I learned much from the teachers in this study about the kinds of changes in practice which

they undertake, why they change their practices (to improve students' learning experiences, to seek excellence in their work, to avoid boredom), how teachers' understandings of their work influence their decisions about change, what challenges they face in trying to improve, and what support is and could be helpful to them as they change (see Kadel-Taras, 1996). The most intriguing findings, for me, however, centered on teachers' behaviors, attitudes, and understandings of their work which affected when and how they changed their practices and how they benefitted from the effort to change. Although their primary purpose for change, they told me, was to better address the learning needs of students, teachers also expected that the work of change and their efforts as teachers would benefit themselves as professionals and individuals. As I tried to make some sense out of data around this issue, I began to uncover the importance of certain teacher-centered behaviors and attitudes for facilitating teacher change (and, thus, facilitating improved learning experiences for students).

By promoting this kind of teacher centeredness, I must be clear that I am not condoning a teacher-centered classroom where the teacher is always front-and-center, making all the decisions about what and how students will learn. My personal philosophy of education (based on reading of research and on my experience in classrooms as a researcher, teacher, and student) emphasizes enabling students to make some of their own choices about what to study and involving students in exploring concepts and phenomena, analyzing and integrating ideas, and learning from each other, and this approach to education is clearly not dominated by teacher-centered instruction as it is conventionally conceived (for example, frequent teacher lecturing that tells students how to think about certain issues). However, the teacher is still responsible for designing such learning experiences, and I believe that the teacher still plays a central role in the classroom to help students make the most of learning opportunities and, on occasion, to be, as R. M. Cohen (1991)

puts it, "the moral center . . . the quiet, unswerving fulcrum of authority and wisdom" (p. 104). Most of the teachers in my study sought to create some version of a student-centered classroom while recognizing the importance of their own contributions to student learning.

Thus, although I am emphasizing in the following pages the benefits of being teacher centered, such a focus does not exclude being student centered by focusing on students' experiences, interests, ways of learning, abilities to teach one another, and interpretations. In fact, my findings point to the importance of teacher-centered behavior for such student-centered classrooms. The data from my study suggest that teacher-centered teachers encourage student learning by being learners themselves and that they need to feel in control of their lives and classrooms in order to experiment with new practices such as allowing their students more control over learning experiences. Cohn and Kottkamp (1993) provide adequate words to defend this position.

> For schools to be positive learning environments for students, they must be positive learning environments for teachers as well. Teachers who are not free to construct their own activities, inquire, engage in meaningful learning, take risks, make decisions, and assess their own competence will be unable to create those possibilities for students. Teachers who do not have self-esteem and a sense that they can control their own destinies will find it difficult to foster those beliefs in others. (p. 223)

In this paper, I have divided my examination of teacher-centered behavior and attitudes into two major sections--teacher learning and teacher control--and the section on teacher control is further divided into a discussion of control in the classroom and a discussion of control over self.

Teacher Learning

Most of the teachers in my study had not forgotten about their own needs as learners. They were involved in various endeavors that led to better understandings of youth, of teaching

and the learning process, of the teacher's subject of expertise, of other content areas, and of themselves. Their continual search for better ways to deal with the ongoing need for change (created by the ever-changing needs of students) led them to choose topics or instructional strategies for their classes that they wanted to study or explore. In this way, teacher learning and teacher change are mutually reinforcing: teachers often learn through making changes in their practice, and when teachers act on their desire to learn, they often are led to change.

Teachers acted on their desire to learn in a variety of ways including participating in various kinds of professional development activities. For example, Ella Paxton (who teaches chemistry) and Gene Evans (who teaches physics) both participate in state-wide programs to bring science teachers together to share ideas, and Fran Naylor, an English teacher, told me about her participation in a program sponsored by a local live theatre. In this program, teachers can bring their classes to a daytime performance of a play if the teachers first come to a series of workshops about the play and then use this information to prepare students for the performance. Not only is the program beneficial to her students--many of whom would otherwise never have such opportunities--but the workshops and plays are meaningful learning experiences for Fran as well. While staff development programs (Corbitt, 1989; Joyce, 1990; Levine, 1989; Little, 1993; Richardson, 1994b) and teacher reflection (Diamond, 1993; Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993)--both of which have received a lot of attention in the literature--are critical means of teacher learning that can play a significant role in teacher change, the data of this study demonstrate that teachers' voluntary efforts at change are, in themselves, learning experiences for teachers that encourage the personal growth, exploration, enthusiasm, and student-centered teaching which previous literature has proposed that teacher learning should do.

Primarily, teachers in this study learned from changing their practice by choosing topics or

projects for their classes that allowed them to study or experiment with something new. June Harding (who teaches social studies) revealed plainly that she teaches topics that she wants to study: "Some of what I do is because I have books on my bookshelf at home that I got through [a] bookstore, and I say, 'I always wanted to read this.'" Ella (chemistry) commented that she saw teaching as the only job where one can read, study, and "play with your toys," and do something different every year. Gene (physics) also talked about the chance to play with toys. When I interviewed him, he had recently been awarded two "mini-grants" from the district to purchase a video camera as well as supplies for making holograms. When I asked him about what his goals were for incorporating these new ideas into his classes, he admitted that, at the time he wrote the grants, he was mostly focused on what he could do that seemed interesting to him. His remarks were candid: "Now I can look back [and think], "Yeah, yeah, I'm just looking for ways for kids to succeed," you know, I take all the credit for it or whatever. But, really I'm just looking for interesting things to do."

Teachers' choices about what to read also indicate their learning interests and support the assertion that teacher learning encourages teacher change. When I asked Fran how she had come to believe in the importance of connecting literature to students' lives and diverse backgrounds, she seemed surprised by my question, as if the answer was obvious. She stressed, "Because I'm a reader! I'm a reader, and I'm a voracious reader." June, who believed that reading was one of her strengths as a teacher, referred to her reading choices, such as the *New York Times*, when she discussed where she got ideas for topics and activities for her social studies classes. As we talked, she pulled a book from a shelf about the Salem witch trials to provide an example of how her own reading stimulates ideas for teaching. "I was reading this book," she said. "And they talked about how the accusers and the defendants in the trials were different." From the book, June had

learned about economic and feminist issues that were evident in the witch trials, and she developed a role-playing activity to help her students explore these ideas. She explained, "I hoped that they might come up with these explanations on their own and see that there's more to the Salem witch trials than just the usual, you know, 'hysteria' and all that."

Teachers also attended to and talked about their own learning styles, and their approaches to learning clearly influenced their approaches to teaching their students. Lisa Monroe, a Spanish teacher, provides an explicit example of this. As a learner, Lisa recognized that she preferred to be physically active while she challenged her mind. Having taught skiing and swimming before, she desired other learning opportunities for herself besides those that were possible in her high school classroom. Professionally, she felt the need to learn more about her subject matter, and she had been thinking about travelling in a Spanish-speaking country and doing something "besides education" there. She mentioned being a ski instructor or white-water rafting guide, because she needed to do "something outdoors, something physical." Lisa brought her experience as a learner to her role as a classroom teacher and believed that many students had the same needs and desires as learners that she did. Just as she admitted that she has "never appreciated a class" where everyone is expected to be quiet and still--"I need to be doing something, or my head goes down on the desk and I fall asleep," she said--Lisa also worried about her own students being bored. Lisa advised me of the fact that, "You gotta do something or they put their heads down," and she dreamed of taking her students on extensive trips to explore nature and work with native Spanish speakers in other countries.

One significant manifestation of the idea that teachers' approaches to learning influence their approaches to teaching is that teachers in this study who expected much of themselves as learners also expected much of their students. For example, June's high expectations for her own

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work are revealed through the variety of changes she has decided to pursue which include integrating social studies and English through team teaching, creating a new course focused on student-driven inquiry into current and historical perspectives on broad topics such as human rights or immigration, and using creative assignments and student portfolios. Through classroom observations, I found that June expected students to think analytically about readings and films and make connections among ideas. Just as June has been willing to create new classes and try assignments and activities whose outcomes are not assured, she wants her students to take risks in their learning. She explains her viewpoint:

> And I've always been interested in seeing the classroom as being sort of a mini workshop, or a microcosm of-- What can you do out there? This should be a place where you can feel safe enough to risk doing some things that you wanna try out. Who are you? What can you do? Should you only have this be a safe environment because I've [the student] always done social studies, and I know how to do a work sheet, and therefore, I can get an 85, and that's all I want? Or can you have a safe environment where you can also risk and become empowered to do things other than just what you already know how to do well?

Ella also had high expectations for herself and her students. She challenged herself as a learner to the point of earning a PhD, although this was clearly not easy for her. She never stopped teaching full time while she worked on it and had long stretches where she was not making any progress; it took her twenty years to complete it. About that experience, she told me, "I always tell kids not to start something they can't finish, so I knew I better finish that degree." Apparently, some students are aware of Ella's high expectations. She told me about an Asian student who did an independent science project and entered it in a contest. Ella remembered, "He came to me and said, 'You always say to challenge yourself and try doing something new, so that's why I did this.'" Ella beamed, "Isn't that great?" Observations of her in class also demonstrated her tendency to push students to be "creative" and "curious" and to repeat procedures until they are satisfied with the results.

One implication of teacher learning for teacher change is that the data seem to suggest that the teachers who want to learn and who hold high expectations for themselves and their students as learners are also the teachers who are always looking for a better way to improve students' learning experiences. The teachers in this study, such as Fran, Ella, and June, who regularly pursued new learning opportunities for themselves (whether they were learning about their subject or about the learning process) brought their learning back to the classroom in order to try to improve their work with students.

However, the work and comments of one teacher in my study, Mae Clark (who teaches English) stand in contrast to the teachers who indicated their need to challenge themselves and their students through learning and who were always looking for better ways to teach. Mae did not talk about her own learning needs or ways of learning and did not discuss studying things that interested her. At the same time, although she could recount isolated incidents of changing her practices to improve students' learning experiences, she had told me that she has had to "scale down" materials and "water-down" the curriculum of her courses in response to her perception that students do not want to learn. In addition, my observations of her classes seemed to indicate that Mae does not challenge her students to go beyond simple descriptive discussions of materials to analyze their meaning or explore various interpretations.

Another connection between teacher learning and teacher change is that teachers who follow their own interests are more likely to be enthusiastic about their teaching and to want to create opportunities for students that stimulate a similar enthusiasm. Gene, for example, shared that he tries to "brainstorm and think of something interesting to do," because he knows that, "if it's not interesting for me, then it's not gonna be interesting for them, that sort of argument." Gene revealed that, by allowing himself to learn, he has begun to enjoy his teaching more and to

help students get enthusiastic about physics: "And it's strange for me, each year, I've sort of learned, the more I learn about physics, the more I think it's interesting. . . . So it's easier for me to try to generate that, and get kids enthusiastic about it." When I visited his classes, I saw that Gene's zeal as he demonstrated numerous examples of inertia kept his students entranced and evidently sparked their curiosity as they asked a variety of questions.

An additional connection between teacher learning and teacher change deals with how teachers can be supported in making changes in their practices. A number of comments that teachers in this study made revealed the similarities between how teachers learn and how students learn and suggested that facilitating teacher change means challenging teachers with the same pedagogical strategies that teachers use to challenge students. Karen Valusek (a math teacher) came to this realization when she noted that the expectations she held for her students were higher than those she held for other math teachers whom she was mentoring. She told me that she had learned a lot from working with these teachers:

> I've learned that even though I teach all this stuff with cooperative learning that it's not always easy to be collaborative when you're in a supervisory position. It's real easy to get to the point where, "Well, this is what you should do. And this is what--." And I find it's easier . . . to say to the kids, "I'm not gonna answer it, find it out on your own" than it is to say to an adult, "I can't answer that. You know, you come up with some strategies."

A focus on the teacher as learner also carries with it certain risks for students and teacher, some of which were pointed out by teachers in this study. First, students obviously do not always learn the same ways a teacher does and are not at the same point in their enthusiasm for a subject as the teacher may be, the teacher cannot assume that students have passed over the same threshold of learning about a concept that the teacher has nor that they will benefit from the same approaches to learning. Second, a teacher's lack of enthusiasm for a topic or activity may lead him or her to avoid pursuing an idea that would benefit students. For instance, Gene talked about

not wanting to join a field trip of classes that were going to study physics at an amusement park, even though he thought he was "supposed to do that 'cause it's probably good for the kids." (Even so, Gene eventually decided to go ahead with it; he discovered that it was a great experience for students, and he agreed to go again the following year.) Finally, embracing the teacher as a learner peels back the facade of the teacher as expert, both as an expert on a particular subject and as an expert on teaching and learning, and some teachers, administrators, and parents may not be understanding of teachers' decisions to admit their uncertainties and declare their position as learner.

Teacher Control

The data of this study not only reveal a connection between teacher change and teachers as learners but also suggest that teachers' readiness and willingness to change is related to teachers' sense of control over classroom happenings and over themselves as teachers. I use the word control in two, overlapping ways; the first is the idea of being in charge or exercising authority, and the second is the idea of having a handle on something, feeling capable and sure of oneself. Teacher control as it is explored here encompasses numerous issues besides classroom management (which is probably the most common use of the term). Control over teaching methods, subject matter and curriculum, and the rate of change in one's courses will also be discussed. In addition, I will explore the need for control over one's will to pursue opportunities, make priorities, and take risks. As part of the notion of teacher centeredness, all these kinds of teacher control seem to be important for teachers to change and improve.

Control in the Classroom

Teachers in this study maintained control in the classroom in a variety of ways and used this control to aid their efforts to improve. First, they used control over student behavior not only to accomplish routine class activities but also to try new things in class. Davis High's Staff Development Facilitator, Olivia Banks, made me aware of this issue in one of our first conversations about teacher change. She postulated that new, young teachers are not likely to be trying innovative strategies in the classroom, because they are "just overwhelmed by the students." She believed that these teachers had the most difficulty getting students to settle down and listen. Olivia added, "They just need some way to get some control in their classrooms. They use work sheets a lot because it is a way to keep some order."

Lisa (in her third year as a teacher) and Gene (in his fourth year) partially confirmed Olivia's observation. Both of them felt that their teaching had improved as they had learned "how to handle kids more," as Gene put it. Lisa said that each year of Spanish teaching has been "better and better" for her, and she believed that she has begun to "understand kids pretty well" as she has gotten more experience, but her difficulties with controlling student behavior also threatened her attempts to use creative class activities in place of work sheets. Many teachers' comments suggested that controlling student behavior is not primarily about sitting on students and keeping them still but getting to know them, learning how to relate to them, and figuring out what they need in order to learn. Lisa also recognized this:

> So that's taken me several years to say, "Now, why is his head down on the desk? Is that the way he learns? Is he bored? Is he mad at me? Did he have a bad day? What's goin' on in his life that's affecting his--? You know, why is this student really always loud and shouty and how'm I gonna control that?"

Ella and June are two teachers in my sample who clearly have a sense of control over

student behavior. I witnessed almost no student misbehavior in their classes, and they were able to control these incidents quickly, with minimum disruption for anyone else. Ella recognizes the need for control in order to try new labs or other lessons, and she feels confident that she can always regain control if things get out of hand:

> I've never been afraid of losing control. Because if I lost control, I would admit it. I would stand in front of students and [say], "Look folks, this is out of hand. Let's regroup. Let's figure out what we're gonna do. I mean, we can't do this, because everybody's talkin' or--. . . . What's a better way of doin' this?"

Teachers also seek control over the methods (e.g., class discussions, questioning, assignments, labs, long-term projects) that they are using to teach a lesson or concept. A thorough understanding of the purposes and uses of methods seems important for effective teaching, but having control over methods does not mean that the teacher is always certain how new methods will play out in the classroom. Instead, the teachers in this study seemed more likely to attempt something new if they felt they had "safeguards" in place to make it work. Ella emphasized that she does not "take risks without planning." She pointed out, "I've planned things, and I have safeguards." When Ella observed that some teachers do not want to try new "instructional strategies" because "they're afraid of losing control," she attributed this to the fact that they "don't have the one, two, three, four of how to implement this stuff." Thus, she seemed to think that having a plan for how strategies should work was critical to having the confidence to try them and to experiencing success in the classroom.

Ted Wyatt (a teacher in the English as a Second Language program) is a clear example of a teacher who does not try something new, because he does not feel that he has control over the methods. Although he had taken a series of workshops on cooperative learning during the previous year, and he said that he was excited about using this approach, he also said that he was

hesitant to do so, because he had not yet resolved how to grade cooperative projects. "They didn't really address that [grading] very much in the workshop," he noted. "So that's something that I still need to look at and need to get some more information on, maybe some more ideas, before I use it a lot." Later in our interview, when he was brainstorming some ways that he might use cooperative learning in his classes, he said, "I gotta get back to my notes that I took. I'm trying to remember how to do these things." He clearly did not feel comfortable creating and implementing cooperative learning activities without assuring himself that he was using them in some right way.

Lisa, too, worried about incorporating new ideas into her classes and developing a sense of control over their use. She felt that she had to move slowly with her attempts to improve, because she could only master a few new ideas at a time, especially while still learning the many other aspects of being a teacher besides teaching lessons. She talked about wanting to make use of technological resources and more creative materials than what she was currently using, but she admitted that she was not yet ready. Using such resources, she said, "will become a part of my profession, if I stay in it long enough to do it, I will reach that point where, 'Okay, I've got all this under control and now I wanna get to the good stuff.' I feel like I haven't even hit the good stuff."

In contrast to Lisa and Ted, other teachers in my sample who were always trying new things seemed to have a sense of "security" that a class or course would not fall apart even if the teacher did not have all the methodological issues worked out in advance. Like Ella's notion of risks with safeguards, Olivia maintains that a "secure" teacher (who is more likely to seek help and take risks to improve) has "a belief that I know what I'm doing, and I have a knowledge when I don't know what I'm doing, and it's okay, as long as I have kind of a plan that I need to see through." According to my data, one way teachers safeguard themselves against failure when

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they try methods that are new to them is to attempt the methods on a small scale. For example, when Fran decided to try a new teaching strategy that required students to plan and carry out a community service project, she told the university professor who had proposed it that she would try it in only one class. She recounted what she said at the time: "I will not give you a marking period, I will not give you a quarter, or a semester. But I will give you about five or six weeks, one class." Fran continued, "So we did it. My eighth period class, one class, we did it. And I got hooked." Another safeguard is to have a back-up plan for another way to teach a concept if the more experimental approach did not meet all of one's objectives. A third safeguard, which both Gene and Ella discussed, is being flexible about the time allotted to an activity so that more time can be spent on something if students are having trouble with it. A fourth safeguard is to expect mistakes, avoid getting uptight about them, and include students in reflecting on why something did not work.

Teachers who are trying new things also have a sense of control over the subject matter and courses they teach and the curriculum they are expected to use or that they have developed. With her three decades of experience teaching chemistry, Ella was in an excellent position to benefit from her control over subject matter and course structure. She found it easy to respond to students' needs for more time to clarify a concept, because, as she said, "I've been doing this long enough, and I know exactly how to pace the course. And pace myself." Thus, she emphasized, "we don't keep going on and on. You know, we try and master things."

A number of teachers suggested that having control over the curriculum and concepts of a course allowed them to experiment more with new ways of teaching that curriculum. After she had taught advanced placement American history for a few years, June found that, "I was kind of feeling like, 'Okay, this is getting under control.' By three years, you kind of know the material,

and then you can start to play around with it." She also clarified that she is not as likely to experiment with activities when the course is new to her. Experience has also given Fran enough control over her English courses so that she can diverge from the traditional curriculum. In her efforts to teach literature, for instance, Fran does not begin with the assumption that all students should be exposed to a certain set of classics; instead, she now takes into account the gender, race, and background of readers (her students) when choosing books, and she allows students much more freedom to make their own selections. This example indicates that having control over subject matter and curriculum does not exclude the postmodern recognition of knowledge as culturally and contextually dependent, of course content as slippery and shifting rather than a set of fixed truths. This kind of teacher control, as I understand it, involves having enough familiarity with one's courses and content speciality to recognize and incorporate varied interpretations of concepts and to be able to make changes in the curriculum that reflect the shifting nature of knowledge.

The data of this study point to one more kind of teacher control in the classroom. Discussions with some of the teachers indicate that it is helpful to balance some stability and tradition in one's teaching with innovation and risk and thus to control the rate of change. Fran's teaching, which combines new approaches such as community service projects with more conventional instruction such as punctuation quizzes exemplifies this kind of control. Olivia, the school's Staff Development Facilitator and a former English teacher, also observed this in Fran's work. She saw me leaving Fran's classroom one day, and we talked briefly about the change that Fran was making by incorporating community service into her English curriculum. Olivia noted,

> And it's funny, because in some ways she's so traditional too. She still uses punctuation drill in all her classes. I haven't done that in ten years, everything I teach is in context. We have an ongoing argument about it, and she says, "Now, [Olivia], you see, they have to

know this." But, in other ways, she takes such risks with her teaching, doing things that even I wouldn't try.

Other teachers demonstrated a need to control the rate of change in their total classroom life and balance tradition with innovation. Ella and Karen both believed that there was still a place for teacher lecture despite their efforts to incorporate more discovery and cooperative learning experiences. Ella, for example, said, "I still believe that there has to be organized lecture. You have to explain things to students in chemistry. You just can't have this all hands-on every day, all day. Because kids would never learn any chemistry. You have to stop and explain things." In addition, the two newest teachers in my sample discussed that they had to take change slowly and try new activities one at a time. My analysis of the data from this study suggests that controlling the rate of change and mixing old and new practices benefitted the teachers by allowing them to minimize the risks involved with change, focus the extra effort of change on pressing problems, take the time to polish their use of a new practice, and ensure that their practices remained consistent with their goals.

Control Over Self

Control over self, as well as control in the classroom, influences teachers' readiness for and approaches to change. I am using the phrase control over self to refer to a number of teacher-centered behaviors and attitudes that result in the kind of self-discipline that enables change. This sense of control over self includes feeling empowered enough to change and fighting for what one needs in order to improve, feeling self-confident and secure enough to take the risks of change, mustering the will to overcome fears of failure and to make the extra time and do the extra work needed for change, and making change a priority investment among all the competing demands of one's life.

First, I want to discuss the teachers' need to feel a sense of power or efficacy in their work. Typically, the term efficacy is used in educational literature to refer to a teacher's feeling that s/he is successful in reaching and teaching students (e g , Wasley, 1990, Yee, 1990), but I am broadening this meaning to include the teacher's belief that s/he has the power to change what s/he perceives as problematic. Olivia spoke forcefully about the notion of power in one of our conversations. We were discussing Davis's efforts to engage in school-wide reform through committees that would focus on eight goals or "tactics." Olivia--who was organizing much of the effort--was concerned that not many teachers were volunteering for the various committees. She stressed,

> It will not work if a small group of people end up doing all of the work for the eight tactics. . . . 'Cause then you really haven't empowered anybody, and it's so easy in this faculty to sit back and say, "Yeah," you know, "[the principal's] six favorite people did it all." So I'm not sure where we're going to go with this.

She did not think that teachers lacked a sense of "caring" for their school and the people in it, but that "a lot of people are paralyzed on the staff." To clarify what she meant, she added,

> I think it's paralysis more than anything else. How do you get them to believe that they have power? And I think that's been the key to my success as a teacher. I never believed for a moment that I was not the most powerful person on earth. Probably half arrogantly and half with a sense of humor that if I didn't do it, it wasn't gonna get done, so, "Get out of my way," and, you know, "Close the door, and let's design a class that's effective and healthy for kids." But there are other staff members who don't believe in that power.

Although Olivia's description of paralysis may have fit a number of teachers at Davis, many of the teachers in my study did exhibit a belief in their own power to make change happen. June said that she felt "secure" at the school so that the risks of change did not daunt her much, and Ella emphasized that she was "not a follower" in her work. She told me, "I'm not afraid to do things that nobody else is doing."

My research revealed a specific demonstration of teachers' belief in their own power to

effect change: the willingness to fight for what they want and need in order to improve. Some of the teachers in my study seemed to believe that just about any support, materials, time, or space that they required could be had if they were creative or insistent enough. For instance, when Fran decided that students needed to produce a school newspaper, she looked for every possible avenue to get computers into her classroom. I asked Fran how she had procured her six computers and two printers, and she recalled, "Geez, I just badgered people." She seemed to worry that other teachers were jealous of her computer set up, but, she contended, "They haven't fought for them, and I don't feel sorry for people who don't . . . fight for stuff and get stuff and speak up." When I later asked Fran whether she experiences obstacles to her efforts to change, she said, "Not really. I mean, I seem to get what I want. . . . Pretty much what I want, I figure out a way to get them."

Ella also discussed fighting for what she wants when she has a "really good idea" that she wants to try. She was talking about the frustration that comes with a lack of money to get an idea started:

> You'll say, "Okay, I need five hundred dollars to buy this piece of equipment." And somebody'll say, "No." And then you'll see somebody with something that costs more, or you'll see a waste of money for something, and you get so angry. [She laughs.] And you'll say, "The hell with it. I'm not doing it." *I'll say that for a week, and then I'll figure out a way of getting it* [italics added].

Other teachers also evidenced a belief in their power to change through fighting for what they want and need. For instance, when Karen decided to collaborate with another teacher and a university professor to improve her mathematics teaching, she found that these other teachers were emphasizing cooperative learning with computers, and she wanted to incorporate this technology. So, said Karen, that "precipitated my making some noises and getting some computers at school." June also made sure that she got the technology she wanted for her

teaching. When she desired a television and video cassette recorder to keep in her classroom , she worked with Olivia to write a curriculum unit for a contest sponsored by C-SPAN. They won a national award, made a trip to Washington, D.C., and received the TV and VCR.

Thus, Fran, Karen, June, Ella, and Olivia all maintained and acted upon a sense of efficacy--a belief that their efforts toward improvement were worth it and that, if they fought for what they wanted, they would somehow get it. I should point out, however, that these teachers were clearly in positions from which they could be insistent and expect a response: they were known to be good teachers by others in the educational system. They were all fairly experienced teachers, they had all been recommended for my study because they were seen as innovative by colleagues and the principal, and they were all involved in special efforts (such as university projects or state-level mentoring) that recognized their excellence as teachers. Not only might such recognition have encouraged an attitude of confidence and empowerment, but it may have allowed them an external power in the school and/or district. In other words, these teachers seemed to benefit from an internal sense of power while they wielded a certain amount of power in the system to get what they wanted.

In contrast to the preceding examples from my data, Mae appears to be a teacher who is not fighting for what she wants and who is frustrated that she cannot make changes that she desires. She complained that there is never enough money to do the things she wishes to do. For example, Mae described the "success" of a camping trip that she organized for ninth graders the year before, but then added, "Ask about it this year? No money. Nothing. It's gone by the wayside." She described such situations as "very frustrating," but, unlike most of the other teachers in my study, she did not seem to be applying for grants, or organizing fundraisers, or putting her requests in writing in order to seek support for ideas that she had. I do not want to

pass over her complaints as unfounded, because, of course, schools and districts have limited funds, and somebody's favorite program is often getting cut, but I have to point out that, in contrast to most other teachers in this study, Mae made these complaints frequently in our conversation and was apparently taking no action of her own to address her concerns.

Perhaps Mae did not feel that she had enough recognition as a good teacher to insist that her requests be heard. She specifically mentioned feeling unappreciated and unrecognized by the administration, and this may have contributed to a sense of powerlessness. Other researchers have noted that teachers who are not experiencing success in the classroom and who lack a sense of efficacy blame "teaching ineffectiveness upon contrary circumstances and noncaring institutions" (Diamond, 1993, p. 48) or on "difficult working conditions--such as insufficient resources with which to teach and a lack of understanding by the state in respect to the teaching realities that they confront" (Rosenholtz, 1990, pp. 85-86). Some of this blame is surely well placed, but it should not be used as an excuse to avoid taking responsibility for improvement.

Another issue that teachers must face as they pursue control over self in order to change is control over their own will. They need the will to face down their fears and to find the energy and time to do the work of change. Many teachers talked about the fear and risk associated with change when they did not know how a change in their practice was going to turn out. Olivia believed the primary reason teachers fear change is that, "Nobody knows what that change will look like at the end, so they have a familiar path." Ted's admission that he avoided changes because of his "familiarity with doing it the way I've done it in years past" supports Olivia's observation, as does Diamond (1993) who notes that, "If a way of teaching has become meaningful and familiar, it is difficult for anyone to divert from this worn track to some as yet unmarked path" (p. 50). Of course, as I have already discussed, conserving some stability in one's

teaching is important for all teachers, and maintaining some practices which are "meaningful and familiar" can allow teachers to take risks in other areas of their teaching. However, when a fear of the unknown prevents a teacher from making any improvements, some control over self is required in order to meet the ongoing need for change.

I also discovered that even when teachers admit fear of the unknown, they often seek and look forward to change. Fran talked briefly to me about a new school at which she might teach that would involve students in community projects. The school designers "are going to throw out two hundred years of rules and start all over," she explained. "It's exciting, but it's also scary." Likewise, when Gene was telling me about the grants he had gotten to buy new equipment, he was clearly looking forward to using these "toys," but he was also worried:

> You know, holograms--a lot of kids are interested in those. And camcorders--kids love to see themselves on tape or tape other kids. I think it opens up a lot of possibilities. I'm not even sure you know. It's sort of like, when you get these [grants], it's like, I'm almost afraid sometimes to get them, 'cause then . . . I feel really responsible for producing quality work . . . . So, it's got that trepidation, that risk-taking stuff, right?

I think it is also important to note that, even when Gene was excited about a change and had, in fact, instigated it (not just agreed to do it) by applying for a grant, he still felt afraid of the demands of it.

Some teachers never talked to me about any fear of taking risks and trying new things, and their bold steps suggested that fear was not much of an issue. June, for instance, spoke about her new course and creative assignments as if these changes were simply natural, given her goals for her classes. She did reveal that the "experiment" of the new course sometimes challenged her to find solutions to unanticipated problems, but these were only temporary barriers, not reasons to get worried. Also undaunted by the risk of change, Ella assured me that, "I'm not afraid to try something." She recognized the risk of not knowing how a change would turn out, but because,

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as I have already shared, she was not afraid of losing control, she did not let fears of the unknown stop her from trying new things. "There's sometimes I tread out in waters that are just so deep, and I don't know what's going to happen, and it works out. Sometimes it doesn't work out. But most of the time it does work out."

Teachers also admitted that change takes extra work and extra time which they did not always want to give. Gene was the most candid about this issue when he explained that he did not, at first, want to take students on a physics field trip, "'cause it seems like a lot of work. It's that sort of thing, you know. I can't help it, I'm human." He was not looking forward to having to raise the money and do all the other planning involved. Gene was not the only teacher who noted the extra work and time that is necessary for change. Ted hesitated to implement cooperative learning activities because, he said, "It's going to take some more planning time on my part." Also, June admitted that helping students locate materials for her more creative assignments "takes tremendous time" as does finding her own resources to use with her classes. She revealed that she spends many weekends and parts of most holidays and breaks doing research at the library for her classes.

Despite the challenges posed by the fear, work, and time that can accompany change, most of the teachers in this study had decided to practice a kind of control over self that compelled them to swallow their fear, take on the work required, and make the time necessary to improve. As Gene said, "I sort of force myself to do it anyway." One reason, I think, that most of the teachers in my study could get past the hesitancy to make change was that they believed that changes would, in the long run, "make their lives easier" (to paraphrase Ella). I asked Olivia specifically what makes change "worth it," and she responded,

> To see the difference in the kids. For the teachers I can think of, when I've been with them observing what's going on in the classroom, it's to see kids engaged. To see kids

> *coming* to class, rather than finding ways *not* to come to class. To see that kid who hasn't been in anybody else's class all day--came to yours. 'Cause that does happen. . . . And from there, you go, "Okay. Okay. Only one kid today, but whoa! Let's try the next kid."

Ella also thought change was worth it when she saw the difference it made for her students. She talked about how it was "crazy" to ask for a double period for her chemistry classes, because she would then "have to teach longer each week." She continued: "I didn't want to ask for more time, I really didn't. That was dumb to do that. But, it meant that I was more satisfied with my teaching. And the kids learned a lot more."

Taking on the challenges of change and practicing control over self was made possible not only by teachers' expectations that changing would make their lives easier and allow more satisfaction with their teaching, but also by a sense of security and confidence as teachers. Olivia used the term "security" to denote a sense of purpose in one's work and surety about one's abilities. She later added, "It's a little chutzpah, it's belief in yourself." In contrast, she observed that, "If you're insecure, you're going to use the [course] book as your bible, which is the least inspiring text, and you're not going to stray from the known." Similarly, Karen observed that teachers differ in their feelings of "comfort." She compared teachers in her math project who were "trying here and there with new lessons" to others who "just scoop up everything and just run with it." Also, June reflected that she is able to take risks with her teaching because, "I feel fairly secure here."

Closely linking to a sense of security as a teacher is a feeling of confidence, which also relates back to whether or not one feels in control in the classroom. Some teachers suggested that improved self-confidence results from successful changes in practice, but my data also suggest that confidence is important for being ready for change. In fact, my analysis leads me to believe that self-confidence, readiness for change, and success with change are intertwined and

mutually reinforcing. Olivia believed that changes in the person as teacher--such as improved self-esteem--come before a teacher makes changes in her practice, she suggested, "It was an internal change with them, and therefore they were ready to take a risk." But she also noted that success with changes can make a teacher even more "sure of herself" and "empowered" to try new things Confidence seems to have been both an instigator and result of change for Ella who laughingly shared, "I was always very confident. I'm even more confident now."

A final issue related to control over self is control in one's personal life. This kind of control takes on various manifestations in the data of this study. First, Olivia suggested that teachers need the ability to take care of themselves and get what they need to be happy in order to concentrate on improving their work lives. In her observations of the lives and work of other teachers, she has come to believe that teachers who seek excellence in their work "have happy personal lives." She continued,

> [Their lives] haven't always gone well. I mean, they've had deaths and they've had divorces and tragedies, but they've prevailed, and they had a modicum of dignity through it all. People I see with messed up personal lives, surprise, surprise, they have chaotic classrooms. Maybe there should be a personal life test to become a teacher, you know "Get your act together and become what you're gonna become, and get your counseling done, and then come into the classroom."

Olivia's observations are supported by the research of Hopkins (1990) who studied teachers who ranked highly on both measures of psychological development and measures of classroom innovation. Such teachers, says the author, were "happy in their work, tolerant, and supportive of their professional colleagues. Not trapped by their own self-concept, they displayed the qualities of self-understanding and self-acceptance."

A second aspect of control in one's personal life is the ability to prioritize the many commitments of work and home life. In general, teachers do not have a lot of time during their

work day to pursue professional development opportunities or reflect on their practice and plan for change, and, unlike other professionals, teachers are rarely paid for the additional hours they commit to their job after the regular work day. With no apparent modifications forthcoming to this unfortunate state of affairs, teachers realize that, to invest the time and energy for change, they have to rethink investments in other activities in their lives. Teachers are more and less willing to make the work of change a priority investment.

In this study, teachers whose children are still at home seemed to struggle the most with how to balance work and home commitments, but they are aware of these possibly competing interests and keep their priorities in mind when making decisions. For example, Karen found it difficult to make enough time for both her work and her three teenagers, but she felt confident that the professional commitments she has made to pursue a graduate degree and mentor other math teachers are appropriate right now. Gene, who had two preschool age children at home, also felt the pressure to prioritize family and work commitments and emphasized that time for his family was particularly important at this point in his life. He stressed, "I want to be creative and try different stuff, but I also have a real commitment to my family, and sometimes I can't always make the commitments to school that other people without the family commitment might make."

Other teachers did not have as much difficulty making professional change a priority, because their children were grown, but they also clarified that they would not have been so involved in changing their work lives if their children had still been at home. June, for instance, justified her participation in Davis's school-wide change initiative by noting that she now has fewer responsibilities involving her own children: "One [child] that just graduated last June was involved in three sports, and I really didn't have much time to do things. So now I only have one at home, and two away at college, I have a little more free time in the afternoon to do things."

Similarly, Fran said that she was "willing to kill myself right now" because "my kids are grown and gone." She continued,

> When my children were home, I knocked the kids in [Davis] down gettin' out the [door], so I could be home at three o'clock. And I had no qualms about that, and I knew that when my kids were gone, and didn't need me at home anymore, I would hang around and do as much as I wanted to do. And so that's what I'm doin'.

The women in my study who did not have families pointed out that this contributed to their ability to make their work a priority. Olivia stressed that being unmarried and without a family has allowed her to do whatever she wanted whenever she wanted, whether it was travelling, buying a house, or making changes at school. Similarly, Lisa realized that she has a lot of time to give to her teaching, including taking students on after-school club trips and attending evening functions at the school, because, she said, "I don't have the commitments that a lot of older teachers have with families and whatever. [I] can do whatever I want."

Women teachers in this study also seemed to suggest that feminist values were important to maintaining control in their personal lives and making work a priority. Olivia shared that being unmarried and a strong feminist had made it possible for her to make whatever changes or take whatever risks, in her work or personal life, she wanted, and Fran noted that the "women's movement" had come at just the right time in her life so that she made sure to be getting an advanced degree at the same time as her husband. (This turned out to be quite important since she became a single mother when her children were still young.)

Of course, not having family commitments does not necessarily mean that a teacher will commit to the work of changing her or his teaching. Mae, who had no children at home and who had been teaching for twenty-one years, did not seem to be channeling much time and energy into creating new instructional practices or intellectually challenging work for her students. The fact

that she was near to retirement might explain some of her viewpoint. The irony of this possibility is that teachers who are young with young families cannot and should not commit all their time and energy to work, while teachers whose children have grown are usually getting close to retirement and may not view the work of improving their teaching as a critical priority. Research on teachers' career cycles confirm my analysis that some older, experienced teachers are enthusiastic about their work and continue to grow and change while others become frustrated, disenchanted, and disengaged (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Fessler and Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1988, 1992). Thus, again, teachers seem to need some control in their lives in order to make work a priority and commit the energy and time necessary for change.

A commitment to family was not the only factor in teachers' personal lives which drew on teachers' time and energy. Teachers in this study also mentioned the need for rest and the pursuit of other interests in their lives besides school and family. For instance, when we first met, at the end of a school year, Gene said that he had considered taking time over the summer to make changes in his physics curriculum that require approval from the state but decided not to, because, as he said, "I need these two months to rest and catch up." Karen also talked about her desire to have more time for personal interests. She was looking forward to finishing her graduate degree so that she could "read what I wanna read."

Conclusion

Valuing teachers' voluntary, ongoing changes in practice is one way of empowering teachers in the process of educational improvement. For high school teachers who want to do more to change their practice, and for those in schools who want to assist teachers in this process (for instance, principals and staff development coordinators), the findings of this study encourage

teachers to focus on their own needs to learn and be in control while they also focus on their students' needs to learn and gain some control in their work and lives. In this way, the classroom and school can become a "community of learners" (Barth, 1990) where, together, the "principal and student and teacher become serious, committed, sustained, lifelong, cooperative learners" (p. 45). Many of the most prominent current suggestions for reform found in educational literature and policy making are reinforced by the findings of this study: altering school schedules to create more time for teachers to learn and do the work of change, ensuring that teachers know their subject matter and methods well, allowing teachers to take risks without fearing reprimands for failure, helping teachers build confidence and security through mentoring and professional development activities, and recognizing that individual teachers hold different priorities at different times in their careers and need different kinds of support.

This study has also pointed out that, as old visions of teachers as resistant and reluctant to change are replaced by recognitions of teachers as change agents, teachers' needs to attend to their own interests and ways of learning and to control the rate of change must be recognized as beneficial to improving educational practices. Those outside of classrooms--policy makers, administrators, and staff development specialists--who endeavor to create educational change, and who espouse the importance of empowering teachers in this process, need to consider altering their usual question to teachers of, "How can we include and make use of you in our educational reform efforts?" to instead ask teachers, "How can *you* include and make use of *me* in *your* educational reform efforts?" With support that they deem necessary, teachers may be able to increase their sense of power to create change and will then be able to use the teacher-centered behaviors and attitudes that have been discussed here to take a more central role in decisions about and action toward educational improvement in their classrooms and their schools.

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